

diameter of the inner annular surface of the gasket and the diameter of the inner surfaces of the glands 14 and 16, for example in the embodiment of Figs. 3 and 4, the diameter of the inner annular surface of the gasket is still substantially equal to the diameter of the inner surfaces of the glands. As is described in lines 30-34 on page 10 of the specification, the diameter of a gasket inner annular surface 39' which is either 0.250" or 0.500" in its relaxed condition is increased by 0.004" when the fitting is tightened. Therefore, in the tightened condition, the diameter of the inner annular surface 39' is 0.004" larger than a gland inner diameter of 0.250" or 0.500". In the most pronounced case, the difference in diameter between the inner annular surface 39' of the gasket and the inner annular surface of the glands is 0.004" out of 0.250". This is a difference of 1.6%. Therefore, even in this case, the diameter of the inner annular surface 39' of the gasket in its tightened condition is substantially equal to the diameter of the inner annular surfaces of the glands 14 and 16.

With respect to the claims, where the small difference just described exists, the claim language "substantially equal" has been used. Where a more exact equality is present, as for example in the tightened condition shown in Fig. 1, the term "equal" has been used in the claims.

For more complete consistency in the claims, "substantially" has been inserted before "equal" in line 22 of claim 23. In addition, in line 18 of claim 18 the expression "only minimal dead spaces" has been changed to "no more than minimal dead spaces" to make clear that a fitting having no dead spaces is encompassed by claim 18. Similarly, the expression "no more than" has been added to modify "minimum dead volume" in line 10 of claim 19. In view of the foregoing, it is pointed out that at least several, if not most, of the claims of the present application are generic to all of the species identified by the Examiner.

An action on the merits of all of the claims is respectfully requested.

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